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NEIL GAIMAN
MARC HEMPEL
RICHARD CASE

THE SANDMAN

THE KINDLY ONES

DIRECT SALES

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ALMOST TIME.

NEARLY. *VERY* NEARLY.

SUNDAY MORNING...

HELLO, MISTER McGUIRE.

ROSE? ROSE *WALKER?* WHAT A PLEASURE. I'M JUST CLEANING THE SIGN. ALMOST FINISHED. COME INSIDE. PLEASE COME IN.

FAWN RIG

YOU SAID I COULD COME AND SEE YOU.

OF COURSE I DID. OF *COURSE*. DELIGHTED YOU TOOK ME UP ON IT. CAN I OFFER YOU SOME TEA?

NO THANK YOU.

WINE?

SURE.

HOW GO YOUR RESEARCHES?

THEY *SUCK*. THE WHOLE *THING* SUCKS.

OH, I *AM* SORRY TO HEAR THAT.

S'OKAY. S'NOT YOUR PROBLEM.

SO, UM. THIS IS THE GATEHOUSE. IT'S MORE OR LESS MY BACHELOR FLAT. NOT VERY EXCITING, THOUGH.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE A LOOK AROUND THE MANOR HOUSE ITSELF? BIT OF A GUIDED TOUR?

YEAH. SURE. *GREAT*. THANKS.

THE KINDLY ONES 9

WRITTEN BY NEIL GAIMAN

DRAWN BY MARC HEMPEL

INKED BY RICHARD CASE
PG 23 INKED BY HEMPEL

LETTERED BY TODD KLEIN
COLORED BY DANIEL VOZZO
SEPARATIONS BY ANDROID IMAGES
EDITED BY KAREN BERGER
ASSOCIATED BY SHELLY ROEBERG

SANDMAN CHARACTERS CREATED BY GAIMAN, KIETH & DRINGENBERG

FAWNEY RIG. IT SOUNDS LIKE A VERY *OLD* NAME. WHAT *IS* THIS PLACE? IT MUST BE *HUNDREDS* OF YEARS OLD, RIGHT?

THE *BODY* OF THE MANOR IS REGENCY, BUT THERE WERE CONTINUOUS ADDITIONS OVER THE NEXT COUPLE OF HUNDRED YEARS. ALEX'S FATHER ADDED CERTAIN MODIFICATIONS OF HIS OWN, IN HIS UNIQUELY DEPLORABLE ARCHITECTURAL TASTE.

THE HOUSE WAS KNOWN AS WYCH MANOR--A WYCH IS, IF MEMORY SERVES, AN ELM TREE, NOTHING TO DO WITH POINTY HATS AND BROOMSTICKS. WHEN BURGESS BOUGHT IT, IN THE LATE 1890'S, HE RENAMED IT "FAWNEY RIG!"

KEYS...KEYS...

COME ON IN.

THIS IS THE ENTRANCE HALL.

IT'S A BIT GRUNGY, I'M AFRAID. I HAVE A CLEANING LADY WHO COMES IN ONCE A WEEK AND SWEEPS A LITTLE.

UNDER THE SHEETS ARE SOME RATHER NICE PIECES OF FURNITURE.

THROUGH HERE.

THIS IS THE *LIBRARY*. I'VE NEVER BEEN MUCH OF A READER, I'M AFRAID. THESE ARE ALEX'S BOOKS, AND HIS FATHER'S. NOT THE RARE OCCULTY ONES --THEY'RE KEPT ELSEWHERE, AFTER SOME PROBLEMS WE HAD A FEW YEARS BACK.

HEY. IS THIS A COMPLETE STORISENDE EDITION OF JAMES BRANCH CABELL?

I'M SURE IT IS.

AND THIS YEATS BOOK. "*THE PATHS OF GOLD*." I'VE NEVER *HEARD* OF IT...

HEY, IT'S SIGNED "*TO RODERICK BURGESS WITH ADMIRATION*." IS THIS SIGNATURE REALLY YEATS'S?

I WOULD IMAGINE SO.

THIS PLACE IS LIKE THE LIBRARY OF MY DREAMS.

WELL, IF YOU HAVE ANY SPARE TIME BEFORE RETURNING, FEEL FREE TO COME DOWN AND BROWSE.

YOU CAN'T TAKE ANYTHING AWAY, THOUGH, I'M AFRAID. THE BOOKS BELONG TO ALEX.

WHEN MONEY GOT A BIT TIGHT, IN THE LATE SEVENTIES, I SUGGESTED WE SELL SOME OF THE BOOKS-- HE WOULDN'T HEAR OF IT...

WOUND UP SELLING OFF TWENTY ACRES OF PRIME WOODLAND TO DEVELOPERS INSTEAD.

I THINK I MAY BE GOING BACK TO LA TOMORROW.

RESEARCHES ALL DONE?

YOU COULD SAY THAT.

DINING ROOM.

MM. HOW DID YOU MEET ALEX?

I WAS A YOUNG AND BEAUTIFUL UNDER-GARDENER. HE WAS A REPRESSED OLD MAID OF FORTYISH.

I PERSUADED HIM TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ME BEHIND THE POTTING SHED.

REALLY?

OR THE SUMMER HOUSE. I FORGET.

THIS WAS ALEX'S STUDY.

THIS ROOM THROUGH HERE IS CALLED THE ROSE ROOM. IT'S A SORT OF CONSERVATORY.

ROSES? IN WINTER?

I'VE BEEN GROWING THEM HERE FOR FOUR DECADES. WOULD YOU LIKE ONE?

THAT'S VERY SWEET OF YOU.

KITCHEN. BIG, ISN'T IT? REALLY, A KITCHEN LIKE THIS ONLY WORKS WITH A HUGE HOUSEHOLD STAFF. I...

I'M SORRY. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO SIT DOWN. BIT-- BIT OUT OF BREATH. YOU POKE ABOUT ALL YOU WANT TO. I'LL BE HERE WHEN YOU'VE SEEN ENOUGH.

ARE YOU...?

I'M FINE, THANK YOU.

SOMEHOW, I CAN'T BRING MYSELF TO DO A "HE LOVES ME, HE LOVES ME NOT" WITH HOTHOUSE ROSE PETALS.

SO WE'LL JUST ASSUME THAT HE *DOESN'T* LOVE ME.

HELLO, UGLY.

KLIK

OH C'MON...

MR. McGUIRE! I JUST OPENED SOME KIND OF SECRET STAIRWAY UP HERE.

OH, *THAT*. YES. IT JUST LEADS DOWN TO THE CELLAR. IT OUGHT TO BE *QUITE* SAFE. THERE'S A LIGHT-SWITCH AS YOU GO IN.

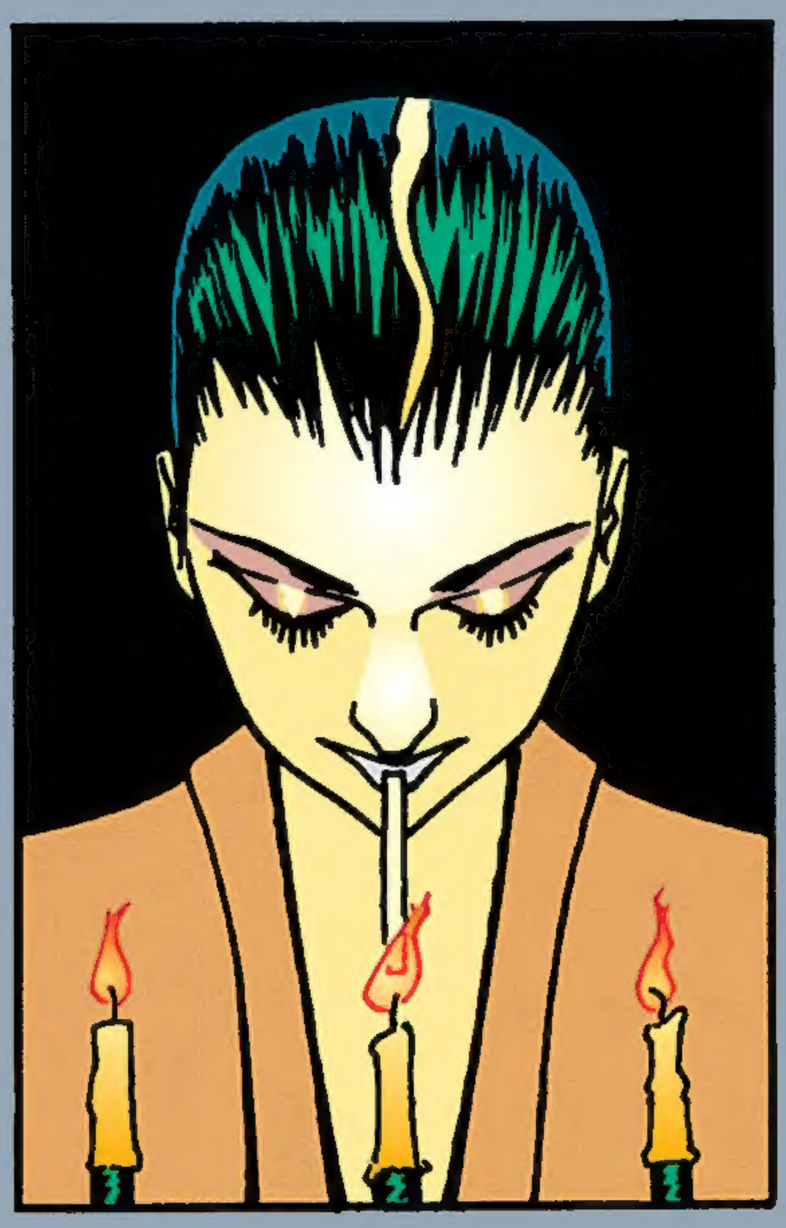
THANKS!

HELLO, GRAND-DAUGHTER.

YOU'RE LATE.

WHO ARE YOU? DOES MISTER McGUIRE KNOW THAT YOU'RE DOWN HERE?

IT STEPHEN KING



I, DEAR ONE, AM YOUR *GRAND-FATHER*. AND NO, I'M AFRAID HE DOESN'T.

HH. YOU'RE KIDDING.

NO, I'M NOT. I FATHERED YOUR MOTHER ON LITTLE SLEEPING UNITY. IT WASN'T *HARD*.

THERE'S NOT REALLY AN ACTUAL TRANSMISSION OF *SEMEN*, BUT UNITY'S BODY THOUGHT THERE WAS. YOU'RE OF MY BLOOD, GIRL.

SO. YOU GOT MY MESSAGE.

WEIRD *SHIT*. THIS IS JUST ONE OF THOSE WEIRD SHIT MOMENTS, ISN'T IT?

YOU MIGHT SAY THAT.

ARE YOU GOING TO *HURT* ME? *KILL* ME? *MESS* ME UP?

NO MORE THAN USUALLY; NO; AND PERHAPS, A LITTLE. BUT ONLY WITH *LOVE*.

LOVE...

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN LOVE?

YOU MIGHT SAY THAT.

HORRIBLE, ISN'T IT?

IN WHAT WAY?

IT MAKES YOU SO VULNERABLE. IT OPENS YOUR CHEST AND IT OPENS YOUR HEART AND IT MEANS SOMEONE CAN GET INSIDE YOU AND MESS YOU UP.

YOU BUILD UP ALL THESE DEFENSES. YOU BUILD UP THIS WHOLE ARMOR, FOR YEARS, SO NOTHING CAN HURT YOU, THEN ONE STUPID PERSON, NO DIFFERENT FROM ANY OTHER STUPID PERSON, WANDERS INTO YOUR STUPID LIFE...

YOU GIVE THEM A PIECE OF YOU. THEY DON'T ASK FOR IT. THEY DO SOMETHING DUMB ONE DAY LIKE KISS YOU, OR SMILE AT YOU, AND THEN YOUR LIFE ISN'T YOUR OWN ANYMORE.

LOVE TAKES HOSTAGES. IT GETS INSIDE YOU. IT EATS YOU OUT AND LEAVES YOU CRYING IN THE DARKNESS, SO A SIMPLE PHRASE LIKE "MAYBE WE SHOULD JUST BE FRIENDS" OR "HOW VERY PERCEPTIVE" TURNS INTO A GLASS SPLINTER WORKING ITS WAY INTO YOUR HEART.

HOW PICTURESQUE.

IT HURTS. NOT JUST IN THE IMAGINATION. NOT JUST IN THE MIND. IT'S A SOUL-HURT, A BODY-HURT, A REAL GETS-INSIDE-YOU-AND-RIPS-YOU-APART PAIN.

NOTHING SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO THAT.

ESPECIALLY NOT LOVE.

I HATE LOVE.

I THINK I PREFERRED YOU, GRANDDAUGHTER, WHEN YOU WERE STOICALLY COMPLAINING ABOUT NOT FEELING ANYTHING.

WHY...WHY AM I TELLING YOU ALL THIS? WHO ARE YOU...?

I THOUGHT I'D COME DOWN AND SEE HOW YOU WERE DOING.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE *SANCTUM SANCTORUM* THEN?

I'M SORRY, MR. McGUIRE...

I THINK I MUST HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP OR SOMETHING.

FUNNY PLACE TO FALL ASLEEP, DEAR.

I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T EVEN REALIZE I'D FALLEN ASLEEP.

WELL, YOU *MUST* HAVE BEEN *DOWN* HERE FOR ALMOST HALF AN HOUR...

REALLY? I HAD THIS DREAM...

IT WAS REALLY *WEIRD.*

...

THERE WAS THIS *PERSON* IN IT, AND I COULDN'T TELL IF IT WAS A *MAN* OR A *WOMAN.* AND HE--SHE-- KEPT LIGHTING CIGARETTES ALL THE TIME...

AND SHE WAS *GOING* TO TELL ME ALL THESE SECRET THINGS. I MEAN, REALLY *IMPORTANT* THINGS. AND ALL I HAD TO DO WAS SHUT UP AND LISTEN.

AND INSTEAD I JUST STARTED *RANTING* ON ABOUT... STUFF. I WAS JUST TALKING AND TALKING. I NEVER SHUT UP LONG ENOUGH TO *HEAR* WHAT I WAS MEANT TO *LEARN.*

WHAT *IS* THIS THING, MR. McGUIRE?

A *BOX,* DEAR. ALEX'S FATHER KEPT SOMETHING VALUABLE TO HIM IN IT FOR A LONG TIME.

OH.

OOPS-A-DAISY. YOU *DROPPED* SOMETHING.

I *DID?*

IT'S A LIGHTER, ISN'T IT? ART DECO, EH? *VERY* NICE.

HERE YOU GO. DON'T WANT TO GO *LOSING* IT AGAIN, DO YOU?

SWARTALFHEIM.

YOU GOT ANY BETTER IDEAS?

WELL, I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE.

HOW ABOUT THIS: I'LL FLY IN AND SCOUT THE PLACE OUT. FLY BACK HERE, WE'LL SNEAK YOU IN, MAYBE DISGUISE YOU AS SOMETHING...

IT...

IT'S HAPPENING AGAIN...

SOMETHING'S PULLING ME BACK TO THE DREAMING...

FIGHT IT.

NO, LET US JUST DO IT. IF WE ARE EXPECTED, THEN WE ARE EXPECTED. AND I HAVE NO TALENT FOR DISGUISE.

ANY IDEA WHAT THIS THING IS? I'VE SEEN A FEW A THEM IN THE DREAMING FROM TIME TO TIME. ACROSS THE SKY.

THE CORD? I THINK... THEY CAN HELP YOU FIND YOUR WAY BACK TO YOUR BODY. SOMETHING LIKE THAT...

HUSH NOW.

THERE'S SOMEONE HERE.

WE HAVE COME FOR THE CHILD DANIEL.

WHERE *IS* HE?

Matthew. You and your friend have done well. I am proud of you both. You have won through all the trials and travails that I created to test your loyalty.

You may both now return to the Dreaming to receive your reward.

BOSS...?

THAT ISN'T HIM.

SOUNDS KIND OF LIKE HIM, THOUGH.

YOU ARE NOT OUR LORD. YOU ARE NOT MY CREATOR. WE CANNOT BE FOOLED THAT EASILY.

NO?

If you believe me to be other than what I am, then you are indeed a fool. But such foolishness can easily be remedied...

Rest easy. I am indeed your creator, little nightmare.

SOUNDS EXACTLY LIKE HIM.

THEN *UNCREATE* ME NOW, IF YOU HAVE THE POWER. FOR I SHALL STAND AGAINST YOU. I AM YOUNG, TRUE. BUT I HAVE AGE WITHIN ME.

AND YOU ARE *NOT* MY LORD.

Please... you must not...

ARE YOU?

NO. I AM *NOT* YOUR LORD. I AM SOMETHING *MUCH* WORSE. I AM YOUR *RUIN*. YOUR *DEATH*. YOUR *END*.

LET *GO* OF ME, AND I SHALL LET YOU *LIVE*.

HOW... CAN YOU *DO* THIS... TO YOUR-SELF?

OH, PLEASE. CREDIT ME AT *LEAST* WITH THE WIT TO KNOW WHICH ONE OF US I AM.

OWW.

THAT'S *MUCH* MORE IMAGINATIVE, BUT STILL NOT CONVINCING.

I SHALL *NOT* LET YOU GO, OLD GOD.

LET ME... *PLEASE* LET ME GO... CHOKING...

I WILL GIVE YOU... A *RING*... FORGED BY THE DWARFS... IT WILL LET YOU FIND HIDDEN TREASURE, AND KNOW WHAT OTHERS... ARE THINKING...

...GIVE YOU... A SWORD... A HAMMER... AN EAGLE... A TINDER-BOX...

...IF YOU HARM ME,... YOU WILL... NEVER... SEE THE BOY...

...IF YOU HARM ME,... WE SHALL TAKE OUR... REVENGE UPON YOU...

THEY CAN KILL YOU, BUT WE CAN KILL YOU WORSE...

KILL ME... AND THE CURSE OF A GOD WILL... FOLLOW YOU DOWN THE HALLS OF TIME...

KILL YOU? I WOULDN'T KILL YOU...

WHY WOULD I WISH TO INCUR THE DEATH-CURSE OF A GOD? EVEN A PATHETIC, SNEAKING EXCUSE FOR A GOD LIKE YOU.

BUT I CAN MAKE YOU PRAY FOR DEATH.

KRUNK

DO YOU THINK HE'S FAKING?

UH-UH. HE'S OUT. HE'S GONE.

SO HOW'S HE GOING TO HELP US FIND DANIEL?

OH, HE'LL HELP US. WHETHER HE WANTS TO OR NOT.

I TOLD THE TRUTH. I WOULD NOT KILL HIM. THE DEATH-CURSE OF A GOD IS AN EVIL THING.

BUT I CAN HURT HIM. AND I WILL.

AND BESIDES...

HAVE YOU NEVER WONDERED, LITTLE BIRD, WHAT IT MUST BE LIKE TO SEE THE WORLD THROUGH THE EYES OF A GOD?

THERE? HIM?

NO.

NO, NOT THAT ONE. IT IS OLD AND WELL-GUARDED. AND THERE IS MORE TO IT THAN THERE APPEARS. PERHAPS LATER.

THERE? HER?

NOT HER. SHE IS, IN HERSELF, AN ASPECT OF OURSELVES. AND THE CAVE IS HERS.

IT WOULD NOT BE WISE.

HERE? THAT?

YES.

HERE.

NOW TO THE ACT OF BLOOD...

THERE IS NO FITTER OFFERING.

AAAAAARK!

MADAME: WHILE I WELCOME GUESTS AND VISITORS OF EVERY KIND, MANNER AND DESCRIPTION, I DO *NOT* APPRECIATE DAMAGE AND DESTRUCTION TO MY REGULAR INHABITANTS...

DO YOU KNOW WHO WE *ARE*?

DO YOU KNOW WHAT WE CAN *DO*?

DO YOU?

NO, MADAME. I DO NOT BELIEVE I HAVE HAD THE PLEASURE...

MADAME... I DO NOT KNOW YOUR GRIEVANCE, BUT I *DO* WISH THAT WE COULD HAVE *TALKED* ABOUT IT BEFORE YOU RESORTED TO VIOLENCE...

BUT THEN, IF I *HAVE* TO DIE, I HAVE LIVED AN INTERESTING LIFE ...*AND* A VARIED ONE...

AND I... TAKE WITH ME THE *MEMORIES* OF ALL THE THINGS THAT HAVE MOVED ME... TOLD ME I WAS *ALIVE*.

THE GREEN PLAY OF SUNLIGHT THROUGH BIRCH LEAVES...

A *KISS*... ONCE... ON THE *CHEEK*... FROM A FRIEND...

I SUPPOSE... I *HAD* ALWAYS HOPED THAT I WOULD DIE QUIETLY, ON MY OWN... OR THAT I WOULD DIE FOR A *REASON*.

IT OCCURS TO ME *NOW*... THAT ONLY THINGS THAT ARE TRULY *UNREASONABLE* HAVE *REASONS* ... PERHAPS ONLY THE INCONSE... QUENTIAL NEED... *CONSEQUENCES* ...

STILL, I *DO* SO RATHER WISH IT HAD HAPPENED ANOTHER WAY...

HOOM...

"CAWWWWWW."

AWK.

Matthew? I was not expecting you.

No matter. you are back. Have you brought me the child Daniel?

NO, BOSS. I WAS PULLED BACK HERE. I DIDN'T WANT TO COME BACK YET.

THE CORINTHIAN WOULD STILL BE BACK THERE. HE AND LOKI WERE FIGHTING WHEN I LEFT.

SHIT. LISTEN, BOSS: LOKI'S INVOLVED WITH THIS MESS. I DON'T KNOW IF THE KID'S DEAD OR WHAT...

Loki's involvement is not entirely a surprise to me.

NO? OH.

LISTEN, I STILL DON'T TRUST THE CORINTHIAN, BOSS. HE'S A VICIOUS SON-OF-A-BITCH.

CAN YOU SEND ME BACK? WE WERE IN SOME FORT IN A PLACE CALLED SWARTALFHEIM...

It is too late to send you back, Matthew.

Events have progressed far beyond that point.

NO KIDDING? ANYTHING IMPORTANT HAPPEN WHILE I WAS AWAY?

I am afraid so. The kindly ones have destroyed the Gryphon on the gate...

Hm. And they have... just killed Fiddler's Green.

HUH? GILBERT? WHAT? YOU'RE KIDDING.

No.

I am afraid not.

I have business in the waking world. I am afraid, and cannot stay.

BOSS? IF YOU DIDN'T CALL ME BACK HERE, WHO DID?

Mm? No, I did not call you back, Matthew.

I KNOW THAT. WHAT I WANT TO KNOW IS--

OHHH. DAMN.

...GILBERT?

LOS ANGELES.

56
12

RIPPED DREAM FACES, FLESH ANATOMICAL, HANGING FROM SILVER CHAINS (THE MOON METAL)--A SLICK GLIMPSE OF THE BAR BEHIND--A FLICKER OF SORROW, A FLASH OF REGRET--OLD MEMORIES THAT BEGIN TO STIR AND ARE SUPPRESSED BEFORE THEY CAN TOUCH HER--

--SHE KNOWS, SOMEHOW, THAT SHE DREAMS--

--THEN THE DARKNESS TAKES SHAPE AND FORM; AND, BEFORE SHE IS REQUIRED TO PUT A NAME TO IT, SHE FORCES HERSELF TO WAKE--

OH. IT'S YOU.

SO.

HOW HAVE YOU BEEN?

Perfectly satisfactory.

YOU *LOOK* TERRIBLE.

Thank you. You, for your part, look much as I remember. This is where you are living, nowadays?

I WAS AT SCHOOL IN CHICAGO FOR A WHILE. BUT THE *UCLA* LIBRARY FACILITIES ARE BETTER, SO I TRANSFERRED OUT HERE.

YOU WANT TEA? I HAVE *RED ZINGER, MINT MADNESS,* OR A CRAMP-BARK AND CHAMOMILE BLEND OF MY OWN.

No, thank you.

I am here to end the matter of Lyta Hall. She is causing ... damage ... to the Dreaming.

TO END THE MATTER? TO *KILL* HER, YOU MEAN?

MM. I *NEVER* UNDERSTOOD YOUR DISLIKE OF KILLING, WHEN IT WAS NECESSARY.

No. You never did, did you?

She has already caused a great deal of trouble. I have little choice in the matter.

YOU HAVE LESS CHOICE THAN YOU MIGHT IMAGINE.

I see.

Your handiwork, I presume.

WELL? AREN'T YOU GOING TO STEP *OVER* IT? *KILL* HER? SHE'S JUST ONE RATHER UNDERFED MORTAL WOMAN. SHE WOULDN'T LAST THREE MINUTES AGAINST YOU.

I cannot cross the borders of the circle.

NO. YOU CAN'T.

DIDN'T YOU ONCE TELL ME THAT YOU HAD TO SPEND A LITTLE WHILE YOURSELF IN A CIRCLE LIKE THAT?

Someone... once told me that we would see each other again.

SOMEONE WAS RIGHT.

Why have you done this? Why?

WHY DID I *FIND* HER? WHY DID I BRING HER *BACK* HERE? OR WHY DID I CREATE THE CIRCLE OF PROTECTION?

I SUPPOSE YOU THINK I *JUST* DID IT TO HURT YOU.

That does seem likely, yes.

NOT ENTIRELY.

I MADE A ...*DEAL*... WITH THE THREE. I BOUGHT A LITTLE MORE LIFE--MAYBE A COUPLE OF THOUSAND YEARS. EVERY LITTLE BIT HELPS--AND THEY AGREED TO FORGET SOME OLD SCORES...

But I could have...

YOU? YOU CAN'T EVEN PROTECT *YOURSELF.*

I'M *SORRY.* THAT WASN'T FAIR.

I THINK YOU CARE ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE TOO MUCH. IT'LL GET YOU INTO *TROUBLE* ONE DAY.

Is that meant to be funny?

I'M AFRAID *NOT.* I DON'T TELL JOKES. REMEMBER? SOMETIMES I *WISH* I COULD, BUT I CAN'T.

I NEVER QUITE GOT THE *HANG* OF IT.

...OH, BUT THE STARS STILL SHINE...

I could kill her. There are many ways to end a human life. I could do it without breaking the circle.

WITHOUT BREAKING THE CIRCLE, PERHAPS. BUT WITHOUT BREAKING THE *RULES*?

...no. I must do it myself, directly.

YOUR KIND ARE SO BOUNDED BY YOUR IDIOT RULES...

EXCEPT FOR YOUR BIG SISTER. SHE DOES WHATEVER SHE PLEASES. SHE'S A *COLD* BITCH, THAT ONE.

OF COURSE, I COULD BREAK THE CIRCLE FOR YOU. I COULD EVEN *KILL* HER FOR YOU. I AM BOUND BY NO RULES. AND I OWE *HER* NOTHING.

BUT WE *HAVE* ESTABLISHED THAT THERE IS NOTHING YOU COULD GIVE ME I WOULD WANT.

I... I did not intend to hurt you.

AND WHAT IF YOU DID *NOT*? INTENT AND OUTCOME ARE SO *RARELY* COINCIDENT.

I simply wanted you to know...

HOW *SWEET*. WELL, IT *WAS* NICE OF YOU TO DROP BY. IF YOU NEED ME, YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND ME.

I'LL BE TAKING CARE OF LYTA HERE. TAKING EXTREMELY *GOOD* CARE OF HER.

May your gods be with you.

OH, THEY WILL BE. THERE'S NEVER BEEN ANY DOUBT ABOUT THAT.

HOW CHILDISH.

MEN!

SO. HELLO, YOUNG RAVEN. I DON'T BELIEVE I'VE HAD THE PLEASURE...?

I'M MATTHEW. MATT. MATTHEW. YOU ARE?

JUST CALL ME RAVEN. NOAH DID.

YOU WERE NOAH'S RAVEN? ONE OF A COUPLE, EH?

VERY FUNNY. ONE OF SEVEN, ACTUALLY.

NOAH. THE OLD LUSH. YES. HIS NAME WAS UTNAPISHTIM BACK THEN, MIND YOU.

HE HAD MORE LUCK WITH THE DOVES. THEY COME BACK. RAVENS GO WHERE THEY WANT TO. BUT I WAS HIS FIRST. AND I WAS HIS, FIRST.

SO. WHERE WERE YOU CALLED HERE FROM?

SWARTALFHEIM. BUT I LIVE HERE.

WELL, SOMEBODY'S GOT TO, I SUPPOSE.

YOU'VE NOT BEEN A RAVEN LONG, HAVE YOU?

ABOUT FIVE YEARS, I THINK. IS THAT LONG?

HEHHH. YOU'RE PRACTICALLY A CHICK.

THE THING YOU OUGHT TO REMEMBER ABOUT RAVENS, IS THAT WE BELONG EQUALLY TO BOTH GENDERS. YOU DON'T SEE *THAT* EVERY DAY. BUT WE'RE AS LIKELY TO BE THE MORRIGAN'S AS ODIN'S, AS LIKELY TO BE EVE'S AS DREAM'S.

OTHER THAN THAT WE HAVE NOTHING IN COMMON, SAVE A LOVE OF FINE CONVERSATION, AND A TENDENCY TO VIEW A BATTLE AS A PRELUDE TO FINE DINING...

KAAAAR.

SO, YOUNG MATTHEW. YOU WANT TO GO FIRST?

I CAN'T. HE WAS MY *FRIEND*. I JUST CAME DOWN TO SAY GOODBYE.

SO?
LISTEN, AN EYE'S JUST AN EYE. A FEW MORE DAYS, AND HE'LL BE SOMETHING NOT EVEN A RAVEN WOULD EAT. OVER TO THE ANTS...

I SAID NO.

I DON'T KNOW IF THINGS *DO* ROT IN DREAMS OR NOT. YOU'D *THINK* I'D KNOW THAT, BUT I DON'T.

KAAAWR. SMELLS REAL TASTY.

POOR GUY. ANYWAY... I'M AFRAID THERE'S GOING TO BE LOTS MORE WHERE *THAT* CAME FROM.

SO. SWARTALFHEIM. NEVER BEEN THERE, ME. YOU ENJOY YOURSELF?

NOPE. IT WAS LIKE A BAD TV SHOW. HE'S A REINCARNATED SERIAL KILLER--HIS PARTNER'S A BIRD. THEY'RE COPS.

POOR OLD GILBERT. HE WAS SUCH A GREAT PLACE.

SO. YOU'VE FIGURED OUT WHY WE'RE ALL HERE, THEN? ALL US RAVENS?

I DON'T KNOW THAT IT WAS SO MUCH OF A FIGURING OUT. MORE OF A KNOWING. ONCE I GOT BACK HERE...

THERE'S GOING TO BE A LOT OF CORPSES, AREN'T THERE? THERE'S GOING TO BE A BATTLE.

THERE'S GOING TO BE A WAR.

OH, I THINK THE WAR'S ALREADY BEGUN.

SO THERE YOU ARE, DANIEL. I'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER FOR YOU.

TO BE CONTINUED...

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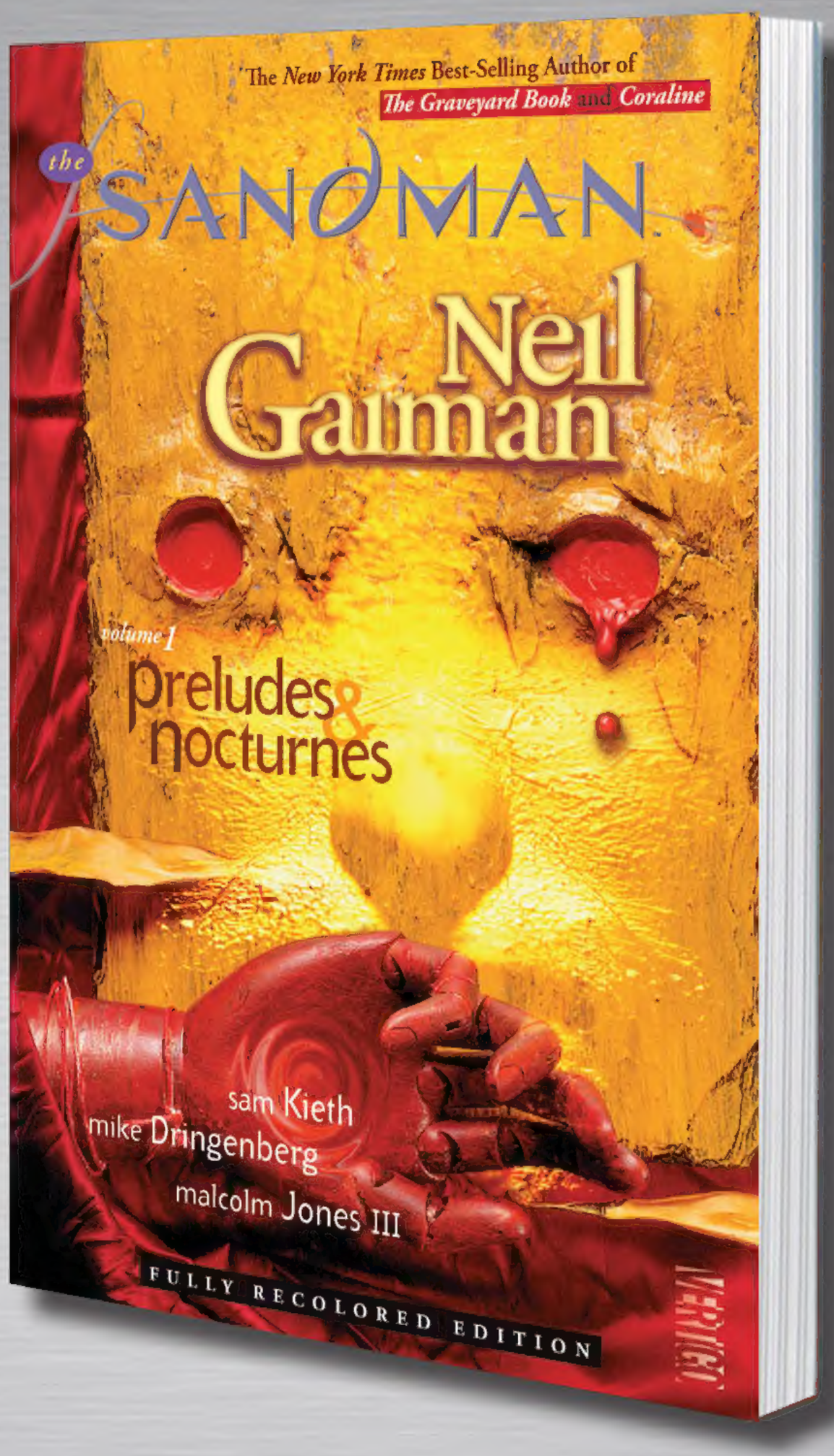
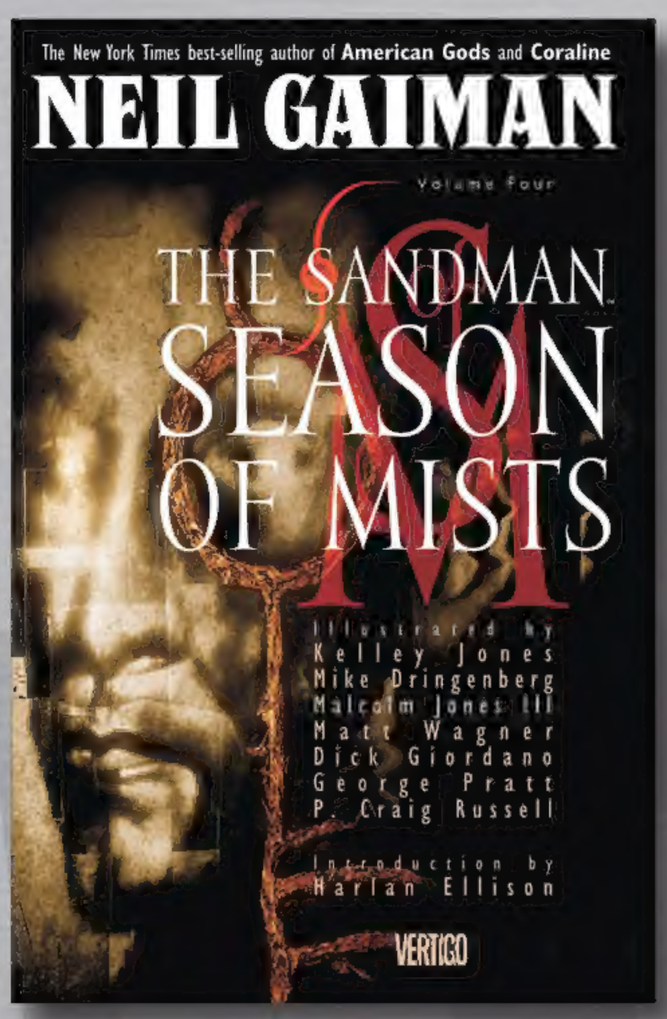
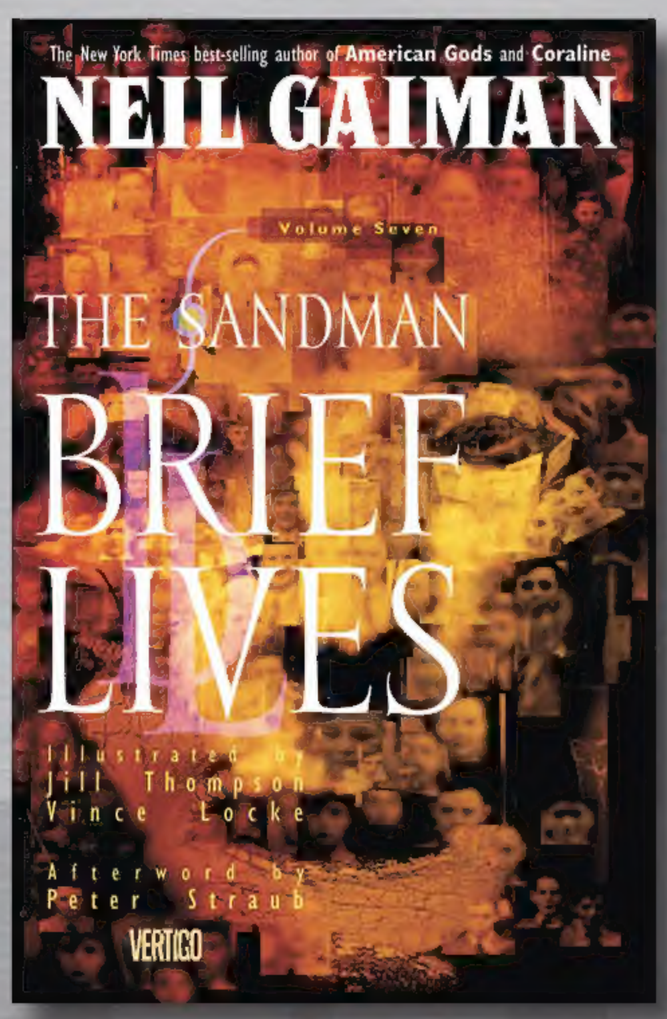


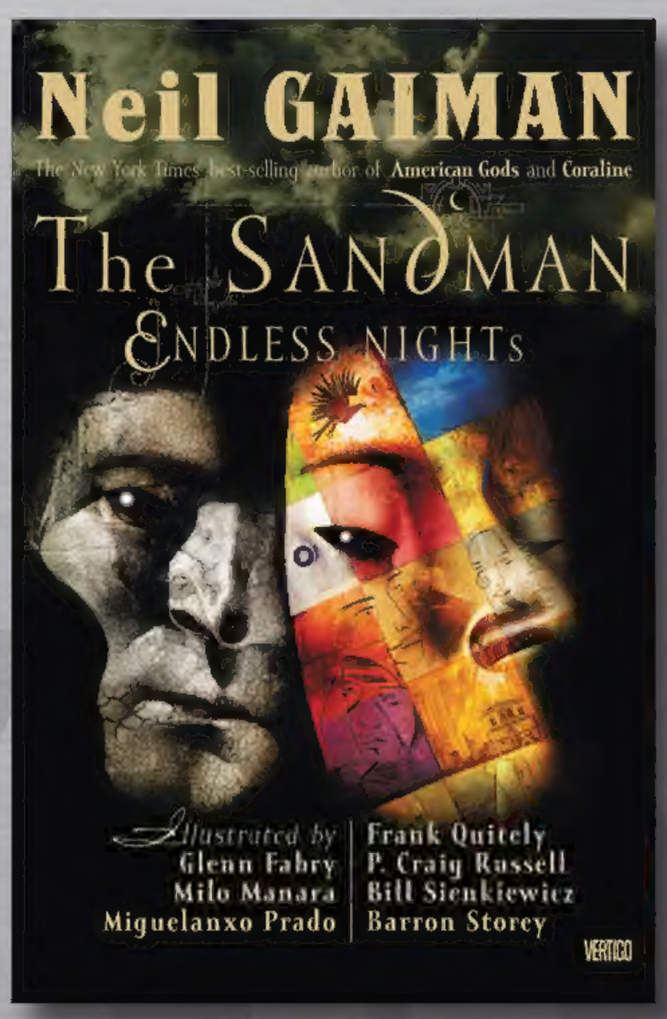
THE SANDMAN VOL. 4:
SEASON OF MISTS



THE SANDMAN VOL. 7:
BRIEF LIVES



THE SANDMAN:
ENDLESS NIGHTS



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